

SUMMER SENSE

DRIVING IN THE FORMER EASTERN BLOCK COUNTRIES

KNOW THE HAZARDS



DRIVING CONDITIONS ARE NOT THE SAME

The purpose of this article is to provide drivers with information outlining the peculiarities and hazards of driving in former East Block countries.

Travel to former East Block countries has increased beyond measure and travel (notably to the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary) by 7ATC soldiers and civilians has become common place.

Driving in these countries is not the same as driving in Germany. Failure to appreciate these differences and the use of western driving habits can lead to serious motor vehicle accidents.

Road designs in the East, while improving, are still antiquated by German and western standards. These designs dramatically reduce safe maximum speeds, which are determined by factors such as pitch of the road and the drag factor of the road surface.

NEVER USE EXCESSIVE SPEED!

The roads in Eastern Europe are significantly more narrow than roads in western Germany. Where most western primary roads are wide enough to accommodate three cars, roads in the East are normally wide enough for only two. When a truck is approaching from the opposite direction, it may be necessary to hug the edge of the road.

ALWAYS USE CAUTION WHEN PASSING!

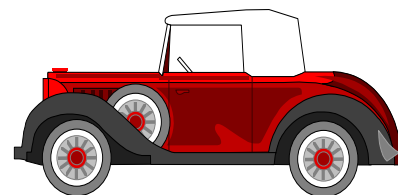
Many east European roads, even primary roads, are without shoulders. The deep ditch at the edge of the road dramatically reduces the margin for error or miscalculation. A brief moment of inattention, which might be corrected in the West, can have serious consequences.

PULL OVER AND STOP BEFORE LOOKING AT A MAP, LIGHTING A CIGARETTE OR DISCIPLINING A CHILD!

The war in Yugoslavia, and other economic factors have diverted an enormous amount of heavy commercial traffic from Hungary and the Balkans onto eastern (particularly Czech) roads. These vehicles are under-powered and create the temptation to pass under unsafe conditions.

EXERCISE PATIENCE AND NEVER PASS UNLESS THE ROAD AHEAD IS ABSOLUTELY CLEAR!

Sidewalks are virtually non-existent in eastern Europe outside the towns and villages. Therefore, it is much more common to find pedestrians, cyclists and villagers with carts walking along the roadside. These pedestrians and cyclists rarely wear reflective clothing and are commonly dressed in dark colors.



SLOW MOVING TRAFFIC IS THE NORM

**BE CONSTANTLY ALERT
FOR PEDESTRIANS!**

East Europeans have scrapped their slower Skodas, Trabants and Wartburgs for the fastest German automobiles they can afford. This has led to an epidemic of highway accidents and fatalities, particularly on the major roads connecting the major cities (for example, Cheb-Karlovy Vary-Prague and Rozvadov-Pilsen-Prague).

**ALWAYS DRIVE
DEFENSIVELY!**

The markings which a driver relies upon in the West to indicate the edge of the road, the center of the road, upcoming hazards, and directions are often either unclear, obscured by dirt or old age, or non-existent. The absence of reflective materials on existing markings and directional signs make night driving particularly hazardous.

**TRAVEL AS MUCH AS
POSSIBLE DURING
DAYLIGHT HOURS!**

**ALLOW AMPLE TIME TO
GET LOST! ASSUME THE
WORST WHEN SIGNS ARE
UNCLEAR!**

The distance between the road and roadside objects and obstructions tends to be substantially less than in the West. Trees, buildings, poles and other objects may only be inches from the edge of the roadway.

**DRIVE WITH THE ENTIRE
PICTURE IN VIEW, DON'T
SIMPLY CONCENTRATE ON
THE CAR AHEAD!**

Despite laws to the contrary, it is not common for motorists to stop for pedestrians wishing to cross the street, even at crosswalks. When you stop for a pedestrian, this action is often completely unexpected by the motorist following you.

**BEFORE STOPPING FOR A
PEDESTRIAN AT A
CROSSWALK, MAKE SURE
YOU CAN GIVE ADEQUATE
WARNING TO THE
VEHICLES TO THE REAR!**

The condition of eastern roads is often unpredictable and potholes suddenly appear from nowhere. To avoid these hazards, eastern European drivers tend to drive in the center of the road.

**BE PREPARED FOR THE
UNEXPECTED. YIELD THE
RIGHT OF WAY!**

Safety requirements are similar to, or stricter than, those in the West. In some countries no amount of alcohol is permitted for vehicle drivers. Normally all passengers must buckle up under penalty of fine. And every road has a maximum speed limit.

**NEVER DRINK AND DRIVE
AND ALWAYS BUCKLE UP!**

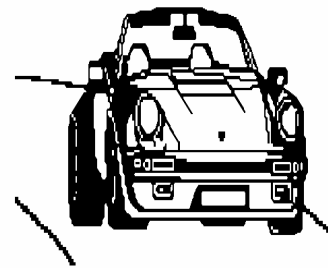
During the past year tension has increased between East European police and foreign motorists, who are often perceived as arrogant, lawless and contemptuous of local laws. This tension has resulted in highly publicized shooting incidents. Although Americans have not been involved in these incidents and American tourists remain very popular throughout the East,

care must be taken to know and obey the local laws.

**ALWAYS OBEY LOCAL
TRAFFIC LAWS!**

**IF STOPPED BY THE LOCAL
POLICE FOR ANY REASON,
BE COURTEOUS AND
COOPERATIVE!**

REMEMBER!!: Visiting the former East Block countries can be among the most rewarding and fulfilling experiences of your European tour. These countries welcome and appreciate American guests. Your visits can be perfectly safe experiences if you are aware of the driving hazards and prepare for them. Drive defensively, never use excessive speed and maintain constant vigilance on the road.



**ENJOY SEEING
THESE COUNTRIES,
BUT BE CAREFUL**